

2. Shepherding

As a community group leader, you have the role of lay-shepherd in the lives of those who come. The specific ministries of a shepherd help us understand our role. A shepherd knows and cares for the flock. The shepherd guides the flock to prime feeding grounds and to safety. The shepherd also helps to raise up more shepherds. These roles can be remembered with the words caring, guiding, and reproducing.



- **Important!** To shepherd your group well, always keep in mind that you are an under-shepherd to God's flock. It is not my flock or your flock! We are stewards of God's flock and shepherding on His behalf.

1 Pet 5:2-3 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

A. Caring

- To shepherd, you must know and care for your group. Jesus gave a perfect example of this in John 10:11-14. To effectively lead people into spiritual growth, they must know you care and have compassion. Before they will listen to you, they must be cared for.

John 10:11-14 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

Caring well:

- Notice each individual and know their names.
- Notice when someone is not participating in conversation or is extra quiet in an evening. Always be scanning the group to discern whether people are being included. Try to include them in conversation or ask them privately later if everything is ok. It is helpful to include them in conversations with others and help them get to know people. If you are talking with someone, open up your stance to include the other person and ask a question. This invites them into the conversation you are having in a non-threatening way.

- Notice when someone is not there. If they miss once, a casual “We missed you” when you see them works well. If it is more than once, be willing to call them or talk with them on Sunday and see how things are going.
- Be willing to talk and invest in people’s lives. A great way to do this is to be available to talk before and after study. People are often very open during these informal times.
- Set the example by talking with newcomers and getting to know them.
- Be sensitive to people. Value and don’t guilt the introvert!

B. Guiding

- The shepherd also guides the group. Your role is to guide the evening through fellowship, into the study, and in prayer. Keep the evening on track! Someone has to end snack and fellowship time and keep things flowing. In this setting, that should be done fairly casually, but still done. Guiding the group may also mean planning a fellowship night, or a care night where you all go to someone’s house and help them when they need it. These are valuable times in the life of a group. We encourage regular times of fellowship, food, and if appropriate games. These kind of things help the cohesiveness of the group and help to include new people.
- Another aspect to guiding is to help the group set expectations and remember expectations. You may want to review the ground rules listed above in the leader’s guide. If you notice some of these expectations being broken such as confidentiality, please address this privately with the person and gently but firmly remind them of the purposes of the group.

C. Reproducing

- Guide the group in remembering that one of the goals of the group is to invite and welcome others. You may want to bring up an empty chair from time to time as a visual for who the next person God may want to bring to the group.
- The role of shepherding includes reproducing other community group leaders. To do this, we identify those with the gifting to shepherd and lead a group and start allowing them opportunities to do so. The best way to do this is to share leadership responsibilities with them in a setting where they can learn and try their gifting. As the group grows, there may be opportunity to form two groups, or have the new leader start their own group. Think in terms of a four step process.
 1. I do, you watch
 2. I do, you help
 3. You do, I help
 4. You do, I watch